

**DECONTAMINATION SYSTEM FOR MAIL AND OTHER ARTICLES**

This application claims the benefit, as a Continuation-In-Part application of US Patent Application Serial No. 10/280,950, filed October 25, 2002, and claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 5 60/401,715, filed August 7, 2002, U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/416,917, filed October 8, 2002, and U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/427,191, filed November 18, 2002, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein in their entireties by reference.

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**Background of the Invention**

The present invention relates to decontamination of delivered items to be sorted, such as mail, where there exists a possibility that biological or chemical 15 contaminants may be introduced along with the items to be sorted. It finds particular application in combination with a two-part decontamination system in which the bulk of the items are subjected to a systematic ethylene oxide decontamination process, while the mail determined to be 20 unsuited to ethylene oxide sterilization are treated with a hydrogen peroxide vapor.

Mail sorting facilities, at corporations that are potential terrorist threats or which handle large volumes of mail, face the concern that a letter or package 25 containing a hazardous material, such as a pathogenic bacteria or chemical agent, could enter the facility along with the regular mail. It has been found that mail

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